

**DISSERTATION:** Defining and Understanding the Role of Cofaqs in Teacher Education: A Multiphase Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods Hermeneutic Study

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This multiphase sequential exploratory mixed methods study sought to define and understand the role and contribution of *cofaqs* in the teacher education classroom to address challenges faced by preservice teachers. This study included 59 participants from two groups—23 former cofaqs and 33 former students who took a cofaq co-led course—to explore the *Cofaq Model*, a program model in which students who successfully completed *Concepts of Secondary Education* returned as cofaqs during a subsequent semester to assist with curriculum development and instruction. Utilizing an original theoretical framework of *hermeneutic connoisseurship-bricolage* derived from philosophical hermeneutics, educational connoisseurship, and bricolage, this study consisted of four distinct phases: *currere*, focus group interviews analyzed using grounded theory analysis, repertory grid interviews analyzed through Generalized Procrustes Analysis and Principal Components Analysis, and semi-structured interviews analyzed thematically. Findings indicate the importance of relationship in developing teacher identity, the unique role of cofaq in teacher preparation and higher education, and potential applications of the Cofaq Model to other areas of higher education. Methodological contributions include the development and application of *hermeneutic connoisseurship-bricolage* within a mixed methods research study, use of repertory grid interviews and Generalized Procrustes Analysis in teacher education research, and demonstration of the potential for qualitative inquiry to serve as an integral, rather than supplementary role in mixed methods research. Results from employment of *hermeneutic-ontologic curriculum inquiry* with a *hermeneutic humility* indicate both the value and necessity of curriculum theory in educational research and program design.